

FIRST PEOPLES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Join us Mondays through Nov. 28, 2005, as we take a look at the contributions — past and present — of Washington's First Peoples.

In 1987, the United States Supreme Court issued an important decision in California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians that recognized *Tribal sovereignty* over gambling activities on Indian reservations. It is a misnomer to think that states "gave" tribes the right to gamble; in response to this decision and to regulate Indian gaming, Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) which established a regulatory scheme for gambling in Indian Country.

While gaming has made some tribes prosperous, it has not eradicated poverty. To a large degree, a casino's location determines how successful it will be. While the 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington state are found in all parts of the state, some are located in remote areas and have not seen the prosperity that urban tribes enjoy. But gaming is far from the whole economic development story. More and more, tribes that have profited from gaming, as well as those which have not, are looking to diversify their economies.

An important element of economic development is having an **infrastructure** that will support businesses. The reservations and infrastructures of the tribes vary from small reservations totaling less than five square miles to some with land bases in excess of a million acres. Some tribes may have an abundance of timber and engage in sustainable harvest practices. Some may have access to the Puget Sound and the Pacific Ocean while others are totally landlocked. Some reservations have busy roads cutting across their lands, while others are remote with little traffic. Every tribe has different resources, workforces and abilities to sustain their unique economies.

Another unique attribute is that often the tribal government is also responsible for operating the tribe's business enterprises. At times, this can create confusion and may detract from a business succeeding. Politics can sometimes get in the way of business decisions. Some advocate for tribes to separate their business functions from the government.

Economic development success runs the gamut with Washington state tribes. Recently, the Tulalip Tribes incorporated a village on their reservation, and developed a major shopping area within the village and reservation boundaries. Unfortunately, they have been stymied in their efforts to collect tax receipts without duplicating other local and state taxes. Some tribes are engaged in manufacturing products. To name a few: The Yakama Nation bottles juice and makes timber products; the Colville Tribes generate forest products; the Quinault Tribes have a fish processing plant and manufacture timber products and the Squaxin Island Tribe manufactures cigarettes as well as processes fish and oysters.

Tourism is an economic development tool that tribes have jointly pursued. They have banded together under the umbrella of a non-profit organization called Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation (ATNI-EDC) to develop marketing tools and also to help determine how much tourism they want. While tourism is seen as a "clean" form of economic development, it still may impact a community not used to a lot of outside traffic. Working together, the tribes have been able to assess their tourism planning needs, build a tourism organization, and publish a glossy magazine promoting tourism activities on reservations.

The tribes are also working together to help improve reservation communities access to technology. A lot of this work is being done in collaboration with the Gates Foundation, the Paul Allen Foundation, many other private foundations and the state of Washington. The tribes are also strategizing how to access additional funding and resources in order to connect to cable, broadband or wi-fi.

Many tribal people who are artists, carvers and other entrepreneurs could benefit immensely from having better access to the internet to widen and develop their markets. In another innovative move, an intertribal group of entrepreneurs is joining forces to market their fish, produce and other goods to restaurants and casinos nationally.

ACTIVITIES

- 1: From your perspective, how prevalent do you feel gaming is for Washington State's First Peoples? From where did you get this perception (consider media, including the newspaper)? Look through today's Seattle Times for representation of other business enterprises that tribes are using to sustain their economic infrastructure, is it represented? Why might it not be?
- 2: Imagine that you are selected by a tribe to design an ad campaign promoting or selling one of its products. Select one business venture/partnership highlighted in today's issue of Celebrating Washington's First Peoples series and design a promotional ad for it (use samples in today's Seattle Times to give you a framework for an ad). Be sure to think about your client and what you have learned about Washington's First Peoples culture when designing this ad. You'll probably need to do additional research on the tribe you selected and its product. Present your ad to each other (consider working collaboratively on this assignment) and then analyze the ad to see if it motivates consumers and meet the client's needs.



Walter Jackson served as the Executive Director of the Quileute Tribe for over eight years. Under his leadership, the Quileutes developed a beach resort, restaurant, marina and convenience store. He is an active board member of ATNI-EDC and is now a national consultant on economic development.

"The most important factor with all projects is that the people must be a part of the planning with the goal of employing more tribal members. If you don't have the support of the people, the project will not be successful. My next initiative is a joint venture among the Quileute Tribe, the Seminole Tribe and the intertribal beef and bison associations to market various native products throughout the U.S. including baskets, beadwork, carvings and natural foods. The goal is to provide improved income for individual tribal entrepreneurs. We are encouraging all tribes to buy native products for their tribal enterprises, keeping the money in Indian Country."



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